

NATIONAL CHILD DEVELOPMENT STUDY UPDATE 2011



NATIONAL CHILD DEVELOPMENT STUDY UPDATE 2011

As you know, the National Child Development Study is following the lives of people who, like you, were born in one week in 1958. What you may not know is that the Centre for Longitudinal Studies, which manages the study, is also responsible for running the Millennium Cohort Study, which is tracking the development of children born in the UK in 2000/1.

The most recent survey of the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) took place in 2008 when study members were aged seven. Just over four decades earlier, in 1965, members of the National Child Development Study (NCDS) were surveyed at the same age.

Many of you have vivid memories of taking part in the age 7 survey. We know this because in 2009 we carried out in-depth interviews with a sample of 200 NCDS members which included some questions about participating in the study as children.

Some of you described the feeling of belonging to something special, others remembered being taken out of the classroom to complete questionnaires and tests. A few could even remember some of the tests that you completed, such as the 'draw-a-man' exercise.

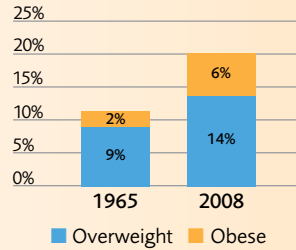
Comparing the information collected about today's children with the equally fascinating data gathered about you when you were young allows us to study how childhood has changed over time. This leaflet shows some of the things we have learnt.



HEALTH

- When you were aged seven a local authority medical officer measured your height and weight. When MCS members were aged seven (in 2008) they were measured and weighed in their homes by an interviewer. In 1965 one in fifty (2%) seven-year-olds was classified as 'obese' and a further one in ten (9%) as 'overweight'. By 2008 the proportion of seven-year-olds classified as obese had tripled to over one in twenty (6%) and one in seven (14%) were overweight (Graph 1).

Graph 1 Obese and overweight seven-year-olds (1965 and 2008)



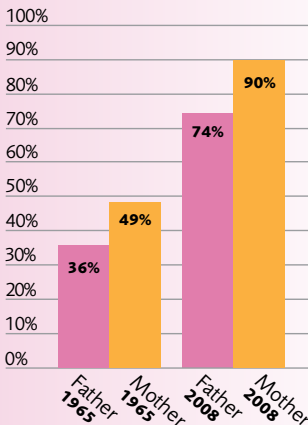
NATIONAL CHILD DEVELOPMENT STUDY UPDATE 2011



READING WITH PARENTS

- Millennium children were read to by their parents far more frequently than you were at age seven but in both 1965 and 2008 mothers did more reading than fathers. In 1965, half of mothers (49%) read to their child every week, compared with just over a third of resident fathers (36%). In 2008, nine in ten mothers (90%) and three quarters of resident fathers (74%) read to their child at least once a week (Graph 2).

Graph 2 Parents reading with seven-year-olds every week (1965 and 2008)



READING AND MATHS

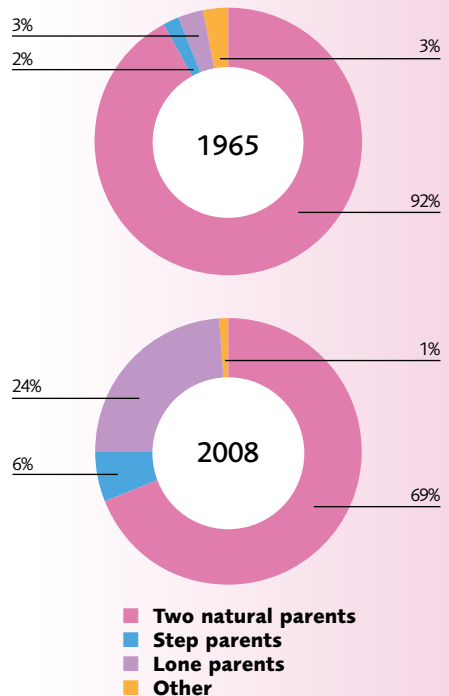
- When you were seven you completed assessments in reading and maths. Similar exercises were given to MCS children when they were the same age. In 1965 boys did significantly better in maths than girls, and girls were found to be better at reading.
- In 2008, girls were still better at reading but there was no difference between boys and girls in maths.



FAMILY TYPE AND SIZE

- In 1965 over nine in ten seven-year-olds (92%) lived with both of their natural parents whereas in 2008 just under seven in ten (69%) did so (Graph 3).
- Lone parenthood has become much more common over the past 45 years. In 1965 only 3 per cent of seven-year-olds lived with just one parent but by 2008 that figure had increased to 24 per cent. In both 1965 and 2008 lone-parent families were almost always headed by mothers.
- Step-families were also more common in 2008. Six per cent of seven-year-olds lived with a step-father in 2008, compared with less than 2 per cent in 1965.
- In 1965 it was rare for parents of young children to cohabit but by 2008 almost one in five MCS parent couples (19%) were unmarried.
- Families have become smaller on average over the past 45 years. In 1965 the average household in which seven-year-olds lived contained 5.1 people but by 2008 this had fallen to 3.3.

Graph 3 Family types (1965 and 2008)



NATIONAL CHILD DEVELOPMENT STUDY UPDATE 2011



WORKING MUMS

- Over the last forty years it has become far more common for mothers to be in paid work. In 1965, 70 per cent of mothers said they had not done any paid work during their child's pre-school years and 55 per cent had not worked since their child started school.
- Just over six in ten MCS mothers (61%) were in paid employment in 2008. Over half of mothers (54%) were in paid work when their child was three, while half (50%) were employed when their children were aged nine months.

AGE OF MOTHERS

- In 1958, the average age of first-time mothers was 25 but by 2000/1 this had risen to 27. We know from other sources that by 2008 the average age at first birth had risen further to 28.
- Around one in twenty mothers giving birth for the first time in 1958 was aged over 35 (5%) but by 2000/1 this proportion had almost doubled to one in ten (9%).

CHILDCARE

- Far more MCS children experienced some form of childcare, such as going to a nursery, than you did when you were young. At age 3, just over three in ten MCS children attended a nursery, crèche or playgroup. In 1965, your parents reported that less than one in ten (7%) of you had attended a local authority day nursery, a private day nursery or a playgroup.



HOUSING

- In 1965 it was almost as common for families to rent their homes from a local authority as it was to own their own homes (40% compared with 42%). However, by 2008, the proportion of seven-year-olds living in family-owned homes had risen to 63 per cent and only 25 per cent lived in social housing.
- In both 1965 and 2008 one in ten (10%) seven-year-olds was living in privately rented accommodation.
- There has been a marked decrease in the proportion of children living in homes defined as 'overcrowded' (more than one person per room – not including bathrooms and kitchens). Four in ten seven-year-olds lived in overcrowded homes in 1965, compared with one in ten in 2008.
- In both 1958 and 2008, children had, on average, lived at two addresses by the age of seven.

FURTHER RESEARCH

The next survey of MCS children will take place when they are aged 11. Much of the information to be collected will be comparable with the data gathered from and about you when you were the same age in 1969.

The comparisons presented here are very simple but researchers are now making use of the data collected by the two studies to conduct far more in-depth analysis of how childhood has changed. The data collected in future surveys will allow us to consider the likely impact of these changes on members of the Millennium generation as they enter adolescence and adulthood.

More information about the Millennium Cohort Study can be found here: www.childnc.net

NCDS SURVEY NEWS

Follow-up surveys of the NCDS are expected to take place every five years. You were last interviewed in 2008 when you were aged 50 so the next survey will take place in 2013 when you are 55. We hope that you will be able to take part as we aim to speak to even more of you than we did last time.





NATIONAL CHILD DEVELOPMENT STUDY UPDATE 2011

KEEPING IN TOUCH

If you change your address or phone number, please let us know so that we can contact you in the future.

You can tell us by:

- Calling us free (from a UK landline) on 0500 600 616
- Emailing us at ncds@ioe.ac.uk
- Completing the contact form on the study website: www.ncds.info
- Or writing to us at National Child Development Study, FREEPOST KE7770, London WC1H 0BR